

## How to propose a pattern of wards

This is a brief guide based on the Local Government Boundary Commission's guide.

Important things to remember:

- **Give your reasoning – explain your opinion using evidence and examples.**

It is important to tell the commission why you are putting forward your view.

- **Make it relevant**

The commission has three main criteria (set out in law) which it must follow when it produces a new pattern of wards:

1. Electoral Equality.
2. Reflecting community interests and identities.
3. Promote effective and convenient local government.

### **1. Electoral Equality**

This means ensuring each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters. Note: the commission base their decisions on the number of electors in a ward NOT the total population.

The commission recognize that perfect electoral equality is unlikely to be exactly achieved. If a proposed boundary is over or under the target the commission you will need to provide sufficient evidence using the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> criteria detailed below.

The greater the level of electoral imbalance which would result from the proposals, the more persuasive the evidence will need to be.

### **2. Reflecting community interests and identities.**

This means establishing electoral arrangements which maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable. The best evidence is normally a combination of factual information, such as the existence of communication links, facilities and organisations and an explanation of how people use those facilities.

Below are some issues often used to assess community interests and identity:

- Transport links
- Community groups – is there a residents group or other local organisation that represents the area? What area and activities do they cover? A well-argued representation containing detailed factual information is likely to carry more weight.
- Facilities – where do local people go for shopping, medical services, schools, leisure, parks? The location of public facilities can represent the centre or focal point of a community. The commission would be looking for evidence that such facilities stimulate or provide a focus for community interaction.
- Identifiable boundaries – e.g. rivers, valleys, woodland, major roads, railway lines. The commission will not seek to include areas on either side of a river, railway line with no crossing points within the same ward. It may be argued that major roads provide a natural divide between communities but in some instances they may also link them.
- Shared interests

### **3. Promote effective and convenient local government**

This means ensuring that the new wards can be represented effectively and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.

The commission will only seek to propose three-member wards if we elect in thirds.

'Doughnut' wards are not recommended.

Ward names – the commission will usually use names which have been put to them by local people. They will also see to ensure names are not too long and are distinct from others in the area to avoid confusion.

Other things to note:

- The commission will not usually consider history and tradition. Communities change over time and perceptions can vary between individuals as to the nature of those ties. The commission would need to hear how those traditional arrangements reflect communities now.
- The commission considers that census (social and economic) data can provide useful background information but will treat with caution when proposing new wards.

It may be beneficial to look at current and recent reviews which can be found online here:

<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews>